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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 006583

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL THORNBERRY MEETS WITH EGYPTIAN GENERAL
INTELLIGENCE SERVICE DIRECTOR SOLIMAN

REF: CAIRO 6447

Classified by Charge Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) In an August 23 meeting at the Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS), Congressmen Thornberry and Cramer and Charge Jones discussed Gaza withdrawal, a post-withdrawal plan to preserve peace, and Iraq with EGIS Director Soliman. Soliman stressed that the GOE would treat withdrawal from Gaza as a first step in a broader plan to implement the Road Map. On Iraq, he urged the USG to reevaluate its focus on elections and work more effectively to end the violence, secure the border, and support humanitarian development. End summary.

CODEL Thornberry meets EGIS Director Soliman

2. (C) Congressman Mac Thornberry (R/TX), Congressman Robert Cramer (D/AL) and HPSCI staff members Riley Purdue and Christine York met with EGIS Director Soliman for approximately one hour at EGIS headquarters on August 23. The delegation was accompanied by CDA Jones, ORA Chief Martin and poloff as Embassy notetaker.

Gaza withdrawal

3. (C) General Soliman praised PM Sharon as a brave leader who made the difficult decision to withdraw from Gaza a reality and thereby opened the door for implementation of the Road Map. He added that by giving hope of a better life to the Palestinians, withdrawal will weaken the appeal of the Jihadi resistance. In particular, development of electricity, water, education, and cultural centers, with the support of international donors, will inspire Palestinians to fight those who threaten the dawn of a new era of peace and prosperity.

4. (C) GOE support for the withdrawal, Soliman explained, has focused on bolstering the GOI's sense of security and diffusing tension among Palestinian factions. Soliman explained that shortly after the GOI announced the planned withdrawal, Sharon told Soliman to work with the Palestinians to make the process smooth or he would "destroy Gaza." Soliman said the factions committed to non-violence towards Israel for 2005, and he is optimistic that this commitment will be extended for 2006. As for allaying the GOI's fear that post-withdrawal Gaza will be a ticking bomb, Soliman said that substituting professional border guards on the Egyptian border will address this concern and stop arms smuggling through the border tunnels. Soliman speculated that the GOI may submit the border guard agreement between Israel and Egypt to the Knesset for approval as soon as the week of August 28. If approved, Soliman predicted that deployment of the guards would take less than three weeks. Although the GOI and GOE have yet to agree on third party monitoring of border crossings such as Rafah, Soliman said that the parties do not want to use the United Nations in this role.

5. (C) Congressman Thornberry thanked Soliman for the critical role Egypt has played to ensure a peaceful withdrawal and asked Soliman to comment on the strength of Abu Mazen's internal support. Soliman stressed that Abu Mazen, along with the rest of the Palestinian Authority (PA), is committed to achieving peaceful coexistence through dialogue and realizes that Arafat was wrong to launch the intifada. Nonetheless, Soliman said, Abu Mazen needs physical, political, and economic support, from the GOI in particular, to maintain the confidence of his people. On this note, Soliman expressed his frustration at Israel's ongoing rejection of donor efforts to support the PA. He offered, as an example, that the GOI has continued to deny import clearance for 50 cars (intended as a donation to the PA) that have been sitting at the Rafah border since 2000. In addition, the GOI refuses to allow the PA to receive rifles or ammunition. Without this, Soliman said, the Palestinian Security Services have no hope of fighting Hamas

or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Although many countries have offered to help the PA, they have grown tired of Israel's refusal to allow them to "deliver," and some have even stopped trying.

Next Steps

16. (C) In response to Congressman Cramer's question as what factors could impact further progress and Abu Mazen's influence after withdrawal, Soliman outlined his vision for advancing peace in 2006. Touching first on the impact of Israeli internal politics, Soliman predicted that the Labor Party will withdraw from the coalition after withdrawal, leaving Sharon without adequate support for the budget. If there is no budget by March 2006, Soliman said, the government will have to resign, and Sharon will call for an early election, perhaps in May. All of these developments, Soliman explained, would likely create a "holding period" that could frustrate the Palestinians. But Soliman said that to sustain Palestinian optimism, he will propose that Israel return to the line held on 28 September 2000 and redeploy IDF forces from the remaining five cities.

17. (C) Soliman expressed doubt that any Palestinian faction would act against Israel in the near term because so doing would give Israel an excuse to retaliate. In addition, Soliman noted that in the Cairo Declaration, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad said they want to join the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This would be a positive step, Soliman emphasized, because it would mean the factions would become party to the Oslo Agreement and, in theory, their militias would need to surrender their arms to the PA when asked.

Iraq

18. (C) Revisiting a message delivered in a recent meeting with USG officials (see reftel), Soliman criticized the USG for focusing on building its version of democracy in Iraq and not taking the steps necessary to establish security and support economic development. Soliman explained that the GOE is not belittling the democratic process, but believes it cannot function until security is established and economic development is proceeding. Soliman accused the USG of "not caring" that the new Iraqi constitution may give privileges to Kurds that could lead to a civil war. "You just stick to your track" by pushing for elections, he continued, even though Iraqis will not participate, and the elections results will remain unchanged. "Democracy under fire without full participation is not democracy," Soliman underscored.

19. (C) Focusing on security, Soliman urged, is the only way forward because Iraq cannot build a democracy without the confidence of the people. Soliman encouraged the USG to open a back channel with the Sunni insurgents, who, he said, are responsible for 70 percent of the violence. The Coalition must not underestimate the power of the Sunnis, Soliman warned. In addition, the Coalition must secure the borders because corruption is enabling foreigner fighters to enter Iraq freely. This should be done through dialogue with Syria and Iran. Soliman noted that it is in Iran's interest that Iraq remain poor and unstable, and added that thousands of Iranians, intelligence agents and insurgents, are going to Najaf and Karbala. The USG must engage to counter this, he warned. Likewise, Soliman suggested that the USG must engage with Syria so it does not "turn its eyes" when insurgents try to cross into Iraq. Finally, Soliman said, that the Coalition should immediately press forward with economic development projects in peaceful areas in order to garner the support of the Iraqi people.

10 (C) Congressman Thornberry expressed appreciation for Soliman's advice and signaled that there may be an opportunity to reexamine the USG's approach in Iraq. Both Congressmen thanked Soliman for GOE cooperation on terrorism, in particular, and the range of issues the GOE and USG face together.

11. (U) The Codel did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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JONES